

**CITY OF DELTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE  
PROGRESS REPORT # 1  
SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS**

**INTRODUCTION**

Informed citizens and decision makers comprising a cross section of Delta area citizens were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on issues that should be addressed in the comprehensive plan update. These individuals were also invaluable sources of information. These statements are the opinions of the individuals interviewed. They have been accepted at face value and will be weighed against public comments and professional judgment during preparation of the plan. Many comments were offered by more than one individual. The comments are paraphrased and summarized for brevity and organized into the following categories:

- ◆ Vision for the future– how should Delta define itself?
- ◆ Growth and development
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Economy and economic development
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Community character and design, including visual issues
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Parks, recreation and open space
- ◆ Community facilities and services
- ◆ Social issues

**VISION FOR THE FUTURE – HOW SHOULD DELTA DEFINE ITSELF?**

- ◆ Delta should preserve its friendly, small town atmosphere, hometown feel, cultural diversity, mom and pop commercial center, historic buildings, railroad town, rural setting near outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat and agriculture – a good place to raise kids with a high quality of life where people have a sense of pride and a sense of community.
- ◆ Delta needs an identity and more amenities that reflect quality. How should Delta define itself – what is its overall goal? Farming and ranching have been part of Delta’s identity. Is Delta a community that serves surrounding communities, such as a trade center for up valley, or a tourist destination? What does Delta want to be when it grows up – can’t have a small town atmosphere that chokes growth. There is lack of a good vision for the future. Stating what Delta does not want to become (a bedroom community) may help to define what Delta wants to become.
- ◆ Delta could/should become a bedroom community.
- ◆ Delta could become an artsy community like Paonia.
- ◆ Prevent Delta from being overrun by chain stores.
- ◆ Delta is small enough to still control its destiny.
- ◆ Delta should be a local shopping area as opposed to Grand Junction and Montrose, which are regional shopping centers.
- ◆ Delta should be more than a one-dimensional community (recreation).
- ◆ Delta still has a unique identity based on hard work and community values such as ranching, farming and mining and a strong sense of citizenship.
- ◆ Elements of a vision for Delta could include: an authentic western community; a bedroom community; a sub-regional shopping center; and a retirement community.

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

- ◆ Growth is healthy, but it is occurring on prime agricultural land, which may be the only direction where growth can occur. It is sad to see land change from ag to residential/commercial, but it is a necessary part of progress.
- ◆ Delta will grow, but do it right. Don't let growth run us over, but don't lock the door.
- ◆ Growth is an opportunity, but uncontrolled growth is a problem. There is a potential for uncontrolled growth from Grand Junction.
- ◆ The city creates hurdles in implementing projects.
- ◆ Higher density infill areas should be designated.
- ◆ Infill first and then expand – difficult to service sprawl with infrastructure. However, infill properties are often not for sale, requiring developers to seek new annexations. Also, the asking price for infill properties is often inflated.
- ◆ Checkerboard annexations reflect a lack of foresight. New annexations should be geared toward higher quality development – don't mix duplexes with estate lots.
- ◆ Annexations may be necessary to support the infrastructure that Delta already has.
- ◆ Need more foresight for preserving open space – Delta will look like everywhere else.
- ◆ There is a demand for new subdivisions, especially with the new four lane highway: Delta could become a bedroom community for Grand Junction. What is the impact on Delta from growth of Grand Junction and Montrose?
- ◆ Two new subdivisions are in the approval process south of town, both nearly 300 homes each.
- ◆ There are opportunities for new development along US 50.
- ◆ Residential growth is due to low prices compared to Grand Junction and Montrose.
- ◆ Growth should be sustainable.
- ◆ Avoid/reduce sprawl – need a central core.
- ◆ High density lots (10,000 sf) in ag areas is a concern. Lots should be bigger. Need larger lots to attract wealthier people with more disposable income, which would create a demand for a revitalized Main St. and the golf course.
- ◆ Encourage cluster housing with open space, but make sure someone takes care of the open space.
- ◆ The tiered growth concept is good.
- ◆ The lack of land use planning in the county results in uncertainty about what might be built next door. The county needs a building code (most developers follow a code, but some don't), and the county should be zoned.
- ◆ Annexation has been necessary in the absence of a building code and zoning in the county. The downside of annexation is dispersal of services. With annexations along US 50, the city has exceeded its ability to provide services, particularly sewer. Annexation to the south towards Montrose is OK. The city should stay within its present limits.
- ◆ Annexation is a short term budget-driven decision to get building code fees and use tax.
- ◆ Zoning in Delta is by request rather than as to how growth should occur.
- ◆ Some new subdivisions are not of high quality, but some are.
- ◆ Delta gets engineered subdivisions, not planned subdivisions.
- ◆ Development should be for the long term good, not to make a quick buck.
- ◆ The North Delta corridor is a hot spot for development.
- ◆ Growth on SR 92 is a challenge.
- ◆ Growth management is reactive rather than proactive.

- ◆ The new urbanism concept should be adopted to make neighborhoods more self contained, particularly in outlying areas.
- ◆ New development should pay its own way, but impact fees may be hard to sell. Require payment in lieu for some services/facilities. The city has de-Bruced the sales tax, but not fees, thus making it difficult to impose impact fees.
- ◆ “Growth should pay its own way” philosophy is wrong. Subdividers already install infrastructure and then give it to the city.
- ◆ Jennings Landing will probably attract people who work in Montrose.
- ◆ There is lots of land available for housing and parks.
- ◆ Growth is affected by the national energy economy.
- ◆ Infill is preferable, but annexations are OK if they increase the city’s tax base.
- ◆ Experienced developers may have an edge in knowledge compared to appointed boards of citizens.
- ◆ Residential annexations cost the city money.
- ◆ In the county, the rights of landowners are sometimes extreme at the expense of the rest of the community – the city is doing a better job at balancing this.
- ◆ There is an intergovernmental agreement between the city and the county concerning uses in the county near the city.

## **HOUSING**

- ◆ Need affordable housing. Need to do more than talk about affordable housing. Inclusionary programs could increase the supply. Delta still has more affordable housing than Grand Junction or Montrose.
- ◆ Need more apartments – only have low income apartments now. More apartments would provide a better influx of newcomers and provide places for them to live as they look for homes to buy.
- ◆ The Delta Housing Authority administers the following facilities and programs:
  - 75 public housing units (HUD)
  - 18 single family and duplex units
  - 226 housing choice vouchers (Section 8)
  - 10 units of senior housing
  - A transitional house for domestic violence victims
  - A housing rehabilitation program that rehabilitates 10 units per year under contract
  - 45 – 50 multi-family rental units are in the planning stage
- ◆ There is currently a waiting list of 136 people – it takes 9 – 12 months to place people in units.
- ◆ The median price for homes in Delta is \$146,000. New housing starts at about \$190,000. The base salary of a teacher is about 80% of median income.

## **ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- ◆ There are not enough industry and jobs for young people – we lose younger population due to the economic situation.
- ◆ Some businesses are moving from downtown east to SR 92 – empty commercial buildings on Main St. are not healthy. Customers go where parking is convenient – it’s dangerous to get out of cars on Main St.

- ◆ Downtown is a community asset. Need to preserve and restore downtown – there is a danger from strip malls. Downtown is the hub and should be kept alive. Main St. should become a specialty shop area. Main St. should draw people.
- ◆ The C of C should be more active.
- ◆ Industrial parks should be setback from highways and not placed along entryways to the city.
- ◆ Walmart hasn't caused Main St. to crash and burn. Walmart has invested in Delta and helps keep shoppers here.
- ◆ The area is economically depressed (need increase in base pay), which affects economic stability.
- ◆ The City Council should be more friendly toward business.
- ◆ Rents are too high on Main St.
- ◆ SR 92: what businesses do we want and not want there?
- ◆ Need more industrial land.
- ◆ Delta has not been overwhelmed by plastic consumerism or an amenities economy.
- ◆ Some businesses are frustrated with their remodeling efforts – city regulations make the process difficult and too slow.
- ◆ Sometimes there are not enough motel rooms.
- ◆ Need a meeting/conference space. May need a public/private partnership to build a convention center, but this is a low priority until the city gets out of debt.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- ◆ Need a truck bypass to get trucks off Main St. – a dangerous situation. The bypass will not hurt downtown because trucks are not interested in stopping. On the other hand, many cars will use the bypass, which could adversely affect downtown. Tourists will still stop if they want to. The truck bypass will cut off Confluence Park
- ◆ Need more traffic lights to slow traffic.
- ◆ The final bypass design is scheduled for completion by 2009; right-of-way should be acquired by 2011; and the bypass construction should be completed by 2013-2015.
- ◆ Traffic from other towns up SR 92 will affect Delta, the hub of the county – streets may have trouble accommodating traffic from this growth. Downtown is already congested sometimes.
- ◆ It's difficult to get to downtown from Garnet Mesa – no good routes oriented east/west. The community's layout doesn't make sense – there are no direct thoroughfares other than highways.
- ◆ Train delays are up to 17 minutes – need an alternative route to north Delta for emergency vehicles. Consider extending Stafford St. north across the Gunnison River.
- ◆ Speed limits should be monitored and better enforced.
- ◆ New subdivisions should have good access to highways.
- ◆ Need a better, multi-modal transportation system. Don't have enough transportation for seniors.
- ◆ The city's major street plan is still current.
- ◆ Chain stores are coming, which presents challenges for managing traffic.
- ◆ There are no major parking problems, other than safety on Main St.
- ◆ Upgrade some streets to arterial status, particularly G Road.
- ◆ The city is not bike friendly – if it were, biking could become an economic generator.

## **COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DESIGN, INCLUDING VISUAL ISSUES**

- ◆ Some parts of Delta are blighted and not well kept.
- ◆ Entryways to Delta are not attractive, particularly along US 50 from Grand Junction.
- ◆ Delta was designated as an All American City.
- ◆ Need more green areas to attract people to downtown.
- ◆ Flowers and murals on Main St. are attractive.
- ◆ Image is important.
- ◆ Climate, open space, scenery, location near Grand Junction and Montrose are important aspects of community character.
- ◆ Six-foot high white fences in new high density neighborhoods are eyesores and take away from neighborliness.
- ◆ Remove junk cars from lots. Cleanup junk.
- ◆ Need better care of yards – some are weed infested.
- ◆ Plant more trees.
- ◆ The city has a historic register. Put more of the community into historical designation and preserve older buildings. Emphasize historic Main St.
- ◆ Old mobile homes look bad, particularly along US 50 from Grand Junction.

## **AGRICULTURE**

- ◆ Farmland is being consumed by development. Dairy farms in Delta County are down to only 7 now. Don't turn farmland into a bunch of subdivisions.
- ◆ People in nearby subdivisions complain about farming activities.
- ◆ Some land near Delta is open range, but neighbors complain when animals get loose – some also complain about wildlife.
- ◆ The price of ranch land is based on development potential.
- ◆ Organic farming is growing dramatically.

## **PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS**

- ◆ Delta has good parks, particularly Confluence Park, a good recreation center.
- ◆ The golf course is under utilized. The golf course will put the city in debt – serves only a small element of the population (only 10% play golf). The golf course is a divisive issue – some think the city shouldn't have built it because it drains resources. The city should have asked for a tax increase to pay for the golf course. Seepage from the golf course has adversely affected neighboring properties – liners have been installed at great cost to the city. The golf course debt is \$700 per citizen. Residential development at the golf course should occur to recoup some of the cost. Access to the golf course is now an eyesore. This may change due to proposed expansion of the airport, which will make a more pleasant entry and could stimulate residential development.
- ◆ Do something with the old golf course. Sell or develop it. While new soccer fields have been added, the proposed sports complex didn't happen.
- ◆ Need a better park plan for the proposed development near Sweitzer Lake and for parks in general.
- ◆ The 2000 Parks and Trails Plan is now out of date.
- ◆ The city works closely with the school district and will soon take over recreation programming from the school district.

- ◆ There has been discussion about establishing a recreation district.
- ◆ Need more space for senior activities. The senior center is used mainly as a meal facility.
- ◆ Need more baseball fields and other fields.
- ◆ The payment in lieu for parks is \$1,200 per lot. Small subdivisions should pay an in lieu fee rather than dedicate a park – homeowners associations often go defunct and then the city has to take over maintenance.
- ◆ Need to inventory all city property and evaluate use for parks.
- ◆ Park requirements are too strict for new subdivisions.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

- ◆ The City has good services – this small community provides all of the services one needs.
- ◆ Streets and other infrastructure need repairs. Some streets should be paved. The city's financial situation is not strong, which affects street maintenance. Need more funds to take care of infrastructure – the golf course used up lots of funds.
- ◆ Delta has a good hospital and good schools. The hospital can eventually double in size. The hospital has successfully recruited doctors (28 recently) because of Delta's lifestyle.
- ◆ The tech school is small and limited.
- ◆ There is not much culture or galleries and no theatre.
- ◆ Make sure that there is adequate water to serve new growth.
- ◆ May need more schools. Both elementary schools have 500+ students rather than an ideal number of about 300. A new elementary school is needed in the North Delta area (need at least 10 acres). The middle school and the high school are adequately sized due to added space funded by a recent bond issue. The middle school enrollment is 420 with a capacity of 525, and the high school enrollment is 600 with a capacity of 700. There is room to add on to both schools.
- ◆ Need stormwater management controls – some streets don't have curb and gutter.
- ◆ The city's potable water supply is probably sufficient to handle future growth.
- ◆ Sprawl: it's difficult to manage all streets and utilities due to dispersed development. Infill is preferable from a serviceability standpoint.
- ◆ The city has invested in sewer service and thus has a stake in encouraging infill. However, a balance is needed between infill and annexing new areas.
- ◆ The water tap fee is \$1,400 for a ¾ inch connection plus a basic improvement fee of \$2,800. The sewer fee is \$5,100.
- ◆ The city and county could cooperate better and make development more streamlined. For example, the city requires 80 foot ROW and the county requires 60 foot ROW.
- ◆ Infill is more convenient for schools, but the school district runs bus routes all over the county.
- ◆ Annexation has been favorable for maintaining school bus routes – the city is responsive to school needs, such as clearing snow.
- ◆ The city should provide infrastructure but should not be in the recreation business (golf course). The city shouldn't pay for all recreation opportunities.
- ◆ The regional sewer plan is a good idea. On the other hand, it may be very expensive for the city to participate in the plan.
- ◆ Electrical supply is not regular due to aging poles and transformers.
- ◆ The loss of staff in the Police Department is a concern – could cause an increase in the crime rate.

- ◆ The city needs a policy to make required extensions of infrastructure fairer. For example, Safeway had to pay for extension of sewer lines and then Walmart and others tied in without having to pay for it.
- ◆ Rapid growth could adversely affect water and sewer service.

## **SOCIAL ISSUES**

- ◆ The crime rate is low.
- ◆ Need more agreement between factions (tension between North Delta and Delta) about where Delta should be headed.
- ◆ The “good ole boy” mentality stymies progress – should be more objective and not base decisions on personality.
- ◆ There is a good interplay between groups and the community as a whole. There is a lack of a class structure.
- ◆ New people bring interesting ideas.
- ◆ Hispanic agricultural workers are not integrated into the community. There is a divide between Hispanics and whites. Anglos and Hispanics are integrated via housing but not socially. Schools are 16% Hispanic.
- ◆ Need to integrate seniors into the community.
- ◆ Need to look at the social costs of development.
- ◆ Newcomers sometimes want to make Delta like what they left.
- ◆ The city shouldn’t force annexations, particularly enclaves. The city has been heavy handed with annexations.